

218 EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
REFORMER

joyous South, all brightness and geniality,
which often
helped to dispel his friend's hypochondria.
That he was
worthy of a place in the French Academy goes
without saying,
and it was only natural that he should
have thought
of offering himself as a candidate and have
solicited his
friends' advice. But, as will be remembered,
his views on
the subject changed entirely; he allowed it to
be known
that he regarded the Academy as beneath his
notice, and
then, in a contradictory spirit, went out of
his way to
lampoon it in a third-rate book, "
L'Immortel." As for
Zola, in 1883 there could be no question of an
Academical
seat for him. He was still in the midst of his
battle, with
his work only half done.

His novel "La Joie de Vivre," begun at
Meudon, was
written chiefly amid the wild, primitive
surroundings of the
Anse de Benodet, a creek on the rocky coast
of Finistere;
but the scene of the book was laid on the
Norman shore,
between St. Aubin and Grandcamp, where
Zola had stayed
in previous years. In Lazare Ohanteau, the
"hero" of his
story, he depicted much of his own
hypochondria, at which
he had already glanced in a tale called "La
Mort d'Olivier
Beccaille." Lazare's fear of death, his petty
superstitions, his
irresolution, were all based on Zola's personal

experience.

So gray a work, which only the devotion and self-sacrifice

of Pauline, the heroine, occasionally brightens, could not attract

the mass of the reading public. It was published first

by the "Gil Bias," which again paid twenty thousand francs

for the serial rights; but when it appeared as a volume its

sales were small.¹ In fact, from the standpoint of circula-

¹ "La Joie de Vivre," Paris, Charpentier, 18mo, 451 pages
j some early
copies dated 1883, others 1884, *vrhen* (February) it would
appear to have been